

NUCMC Catalog Record

Title: Edmondson/Bray/Williams/Stidham collection.

Date Created: 1834-1987.

Extent: 35 boxes.

Summary: The collection chronicles the interwoven histories of several families of north Mississippi and Tennessee. The papers primarily concern the life and career of Isabella Buchanan Edmondson, known as "Belle." She was born in Pontotoc, Miss., in 1840 and was the eighth child of Mary Ann Howard and Andrew Jackson Edmondson. Andrew, a veteran of the War of 1812, worked as a surveyor during the wild days surrounding the cession of Indian lands in the 1830s. He worked in different capacities over the course of several years: Receiver of Public Monies and Recorder of Deeds in Pontotoc; as clerk of the Chancery Court in Marshall County in the late 1840s; and by 1856 he was a farmer by profession. The family lived in several different homes throughout Belle's youth. She was educated at the prestigious Franklin Female College in Marshall County. The Edmondson family moved to Shelby County, Tenn., just before the Civil War began and much of the collection reflects their association with Memphis as well as Mississippi. During the war, while Belle's brothers served in the military she worked as a spy for the Confederacy. She mainly worked in and around north Mississippi and reported primarily to Missouri troops. Belle also smuggled goods across the Union picket lines after Memphis was taken by Federal forces after the battle for the city on 6 June 1862. In 1864 a warrant was actually issued for Belle's arrest due to her spying and smuggling activities and she moved to Waverly Plantation in Clay County, Miss., in Nov. 1864 to escape. It is known that she remained at Waverly into the early part of 1865 but it is not known if she ended the war there. She would end her days in July 1873, two days after announcing her engagement to an unknown individual, a "Col. H."

Materials in the collection include war correspondence from Belle regarding her efforts on behalf of the Confederate soldiers in the area. Much of the collection also relates to Belle's eldest sister, Mary Edmondson who later married and became Mary Edmondson Anderson, then after Mr. Anderson died, she remarried and became Mary Edmondson Anderson Bray. She was also known as "Mollie." Her daughter, Susie Bray, would marry a Mr. Williams and live in Memphis, Tenn. Susie Bray Williams would have a daughter Mary E. Williams who would marry into the Stidham family. The twentieth century correspondence is primarily from the Stidham family.

Subjects:

Edmondson, Belle, 1840-1873—Diaries.

Smugglers—Tennessee—Memphis—Diaries.

Spies—Tennessee-Memphis—Diaries.

Tennessee—History—Civil War, 1861-1865.

United States—History—Civil War, 1861-1865—Personal narratives, Confederate.

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